

Insider

For October 15, 2008

By Kim Burger

Our community loves bicycling! The over 85 miles of hard-surfaced recreational trails, the 500+ citizens who have found it worthwhile to join the Cedar Trails Partnership, the three over-night visits from RAGBRAI and reputation the Cedar Valley Cyclists (formerly the Rainbow Cyclists) enjoys - being known as one of the longest standing clubs in the state, and the over 100 citizens who turned out for a Bicycle Task Force community input meeting several weeks ago bear this out.

At the request of a number of our citizens who desire to expand this activity beyond recreation and move toward a more utilitarian style of cycling, using it as a form of green, healthy transportation, the Cedar Falls Bicycle Task Force was formed. This committee is chaired by Councilman David Wieland and comprised of Randy Lorenzen, Brent Johnson, David Sturch, Frank Darrah, Anne Duncan, Kamyar Enshayan, Jon Taiber, Ron and Mona Smith, Bob Kressig, Bob Morgan, Tom Hagarty, Kathy Green, Kevin Blanshan, Andrea White, Laura Jobst, Jack Yates, Mark Wyatt, Pam Taylor, Kate Stainbrook, David Stoakes, Mike McCallum, Dave Deibler, David Mesenbrink, Pernell Cezar, Sue Hummel, Lauri and Jim Young, Audrey Stefan and myself. The vision of this group is to make Cedar Falls a model city for utilitarian bicycling. This vision includes a goal of achieving official designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community.

The League of American Bicyclists oversees a program that bestows this prestigious four-year designation to communities that have made impressive, measurable efforts to integrate bicyclists into the community. There are four levels – platinum, gold, silver, and bronze. Awards are made twice a year and ours was one among the record high 51 applications received during the last round. While Cedar Falls did not receive an official designation, I am happy to report that we did receive honorable mention and were highly encouraged to continue the work we have begun and apply again. Nine other communities, including Des Moines, received honorable mention and ten were added to the list of Bicycle Friendly Communities that now number 96 sprinkled among 32 states. Iowa has no Bicycle Friendly Communities yet. Our state is ranked 21 out of 50 due to the fact that bicycle enforcement is included in POST standards and police academy training and that there are good education efforts for cyclists and motorists.

The five categories local and national reviewers look at are:

Education: Does the community have systems in place to train children and adult cyclists?

Engineering: Are bicyclists included in the city's transportation plan?

Enforcement: Do police officers understand and enforce bicyclists' rights and responsibilities?

Encouragement: Does the community participate in Bike Month, offer bike rodeos, host community bike rides, or otherwise encourage cycling?

Evaluation: Does the community have methods in place to ensure their bicyclist programs are making a difference?

The Bicycle Task Force has received financial assistance from the Cedar Falls RAGBRAI Committee and Cedar Trails Partnership to engage the services of the Chicago Bicycle Federation to help draft a master plan that will direct our activities as we work to add bike lanes, signage and other features to our streets making more and safer cycling possible.

Stay tuned – you’re likely to see “share the road” messages on our streets and in the media as we work to implement components of the plan and we hope to announce our official designation as a Bicycle Friendly Community in the near future.